

BOOK REVIEW

Catkin-Bearing Plants of British Columbia by T. Christopher Brayshaw. 1996. 213 pp. illus. ISBN 0-7718-9458-9 \$24.95 Canadian (paper). British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, BC, Canada. (Available from the Royal Museum Gift Shop, 675 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4.)

The author of this attractive handbook to the catkin-bearing plants in British Columbia has long been interested in the taxonomy of woody plants. He has a great depth of knowledge about woody plants in British Columbia; in his studies of the Salicaceae he has paid particular attention to hybridization and variation. His experience as a forester has helped him to write about these plants in a manner that makes the identification of difficult groups, such as the willows and birches, accessible to the serious amateur, ecologist, forester, wildlife manager, and conservationist.

Catkin-Bearing Plants was originally published in 1976. When it became time for the book to be reprinted it wisely was decided to make extensive revisions. The book is now close to field handbook size (6 × 9"); the maps were moved to the end, and the size of the illustrations reduced, making for a more compact format. The nomenclature was revised to correspond to that used in *The Vascular Plants of British Columbia* (Douglas et al. 1989-1994) and the range maps were extensively updated. The author's illustrations are well done and, although somewhat diagrammatic, are accurate and useful. I was able to recognize almost all of the willows from the illustrations alone. Evidently, the author is able to convey the essence of the species by pen as well as words.

There are five families of woody, flowering plants in British Columbia that have their flowers borne in catkins; they are the Salicaceae, Myricaceae, Juglandaceae, Betulaceae, and Fagaceae. These families once constituted the Amentiferae. The author points out that this is not a natural group but he treats them together because of their similarities including their habit, inflorescence a catkin, flowers unisexual and highly reduced, and perhaps just for "old time's sake." Among these five families only the Salicaceae and Betulaceae have significant numbers of species in the province, with 48 and 12 species, respectively.

This book has the format of a conventional flora. The introduction includes a brief review of the environmental diversity of

the province and simplified discussions of classification, nomenclature, and hybridization with examples drawn from the catkin-bearing families. A map of the intensity of botanical collecting in the province reveals that less than half the province is well collected, and the mountainous regions of the interior and the coastal mainland are poorly botanized. The main body of the book includes keys to genera and species, descriptions, comments on variation and hybridization, distribution maps, and illustrations.

The information in this book complements recent publications on the flora of British Columbia (Douglas et al. 1989–1994; Brayshaw 1996; MacKinnon et al. 1992). The updated maps are particularly useful, not only because of the detail they give but because they are the only published maps of the British Columbia distribution of many of these species. The comments on variation, based on the author's field experience, provide useful supplementary information. The author's taxonomy, however, recognizes more infraspecific taxa than is usually done today. Some of these variants are very trivial, such as Andersson's leaf shape variants in *Salix barclayi* and *S. barrattiana*, capsule indumentum variants in *S. polaris* and *S. hookeriana*, and the use of the varietal name *S. pedicellaris* var. *hypoglauca*, which has long been known to be an artifact of drying. To include them, however, does call attention to the variability that exists within these taxa and to that extent it is useful.

Better taxonomic editing could have prevented the occasional misspelling of authority and scientific names. For the new combinations proposed in the first edition (Brayshaw 1976), the words "comb. et stat. nov." were removed from the text but not replaced by the author's name. Two of these new combinations proposed in 1976, namely *Salix alaxensis* f. *obovalifolia* and *Corylus cornuta* f. *glandulosa*, were not validly published (Argus 1977) because a complete citation of the original name was not included. This omission could have been corrected in the present edition.

These criticisms aside, Dr. Brayshaw has done an excellent job of providing an alternative view of the taxonomy of these plants. His work will stand as a useful reference for anyone working with the flora of British Columbia.

LITERATURE CITED

- ARGUS, G. W. 1977. Catkin Bearing Plants (Amentiferae) of British Columbia. Review. *Canad. Field-Nat.* 91: 107–108.

- BRAYSHAW, T. C. 1976. Catkin bearing plants (Amentiferae) of British Columbia. British Columbia Provincial Museum, Occasional Paper 18.
- . 1996. Trees and Shrubs of British Columbia. Royal British Columbia Museum Handbook. Victoria, B.C.
- DOUGLAS, G. W., G. B. STRALEY, AND D. MEIDINGER. 1989–1994. The Vascular Plants of British Columbia. 4 Parts. British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Research Program, Special Report Series.
- MACKINNON, A., J. POJAR, AND R. COUPÉ, EDS. 1992. Plants of Northern British Columbia. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta.

—GEORGE W. ARGUS, 310 Haskins Rd., Merrickville R3, Ontario, K0G 1N0, Canada.